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## Darigold ammonia leak kills fish in Issaquah creek

ISSAQUAH, Wash. -- A small ammonia leak from the Darigold plant at Issaquah spilled through a storm drain into the East Fork of Issaquah Creek and killed about four-dozen fish.

The Ecology Department says most of the fish were small sculpin with a few salmon and trout.

The spill was discovered Wednesday by a state biologist who was surveying spawning salmon in the stream.

The dairy plant stopped the refrigerant leak by mid-afternoon. The total amount of the spill is unknown.

The Ecology Department says Darigold is cooperating with the investigation into the cause of the spill.

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# Ammonia leak kills fish in Issaquah Creek

by [Sabra Gertsch](#)Originally printed at <http://www.komoneews.com/news/63735952.html>

ISSAQUAH, Wash. -- It all began when a biologist smelled trouble while surveying spawning salmon in Issaquah Creek.

The biologist noticed some 40 dead fish along a quarter-mile stretch of the creek. They were of multiple species -- sculpin, trout and Chinook salmon.

Then the scientist at the state Department of Fish and Wildlife noticed the stench of ammonia in the air. That stench led him to a nearby plant.

According to the Department of Ecology, an ammonia leak from a nearby processing plant is to blame for the dead fish.

Darigold's processing plant, which uses ammonia for its refrigeration system, leaked the chemical from its roof, investigators said.

The leaked ammonia then mixed in storm water, shot out through a pipe and right into the east fork of Issaquah Creek.

"They knew there was a leak (Wednesday) morning and shut down their system to fix it. They did not know it went to surface water," said Lori LeVander with the Department of Ecology.

After a day of pH-level testing, biologists declared the creek water safe again on Wednesday night. And to be sure it stays safe, Darigold employees will check the pH levels of the water leaving the plant every two hours.

"We are doing everything as a community to protect salmon and water quality. And (when) something like this happens, it can wipe out a stretch...(it) can have some serious impacts," LeVander said.

"It's hard to see fish die. Healthy fish coming back to spawn after all they've gone through to go out

to the ocean and come back, then to die instantly because of a spill."

The Department of Ecology, along with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, plan to launch an investigation with collected fish tissue samples.

**Department of Ecology News Release - October 7, 2009**

**09-246**

**Ammonia spill causes fish kill in East Fork of Issaquah Creek**

BELLEVUE - An accidental release of ammonia from a dairy processing plant caused a fish kill today in the East Fork of Issaquah Creek in Issaquah.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) responded to the incident after receiving a report of dead fish from a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologist surveying spawning salmon in the stream. Most of the 40-50 dead fish observed were sculpin, a small freshwater fish, with a small number of salmon and trout also affected.

An unknown volume of ammonia entered the creek from the Darigold Inc. plant at 611 Front Street North. The company secured a small leak and stopped the release by mid-afternoon. The duration of the leak was not known.

WDFW observed dead or dying fish over a quarter mile reach of the stream, between the plant and the East Fork's confluence with Issaquah Creek. By late afternoon, ammonia in calm pools along the stream appeared to have evaporated.

Darigold is cooperating with Ecology in investigating the cause of the release.

At the same time, a separate, natural die-off of salmon is occurring in the same area as part of the chinook and coho spawning cycle.

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